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**Moral Responsibilities between Parent and Children through Lifespan  
in China**

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**Moral Responsibilities between Parent and Children through Lifespan  
in China**

by

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**Report**

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My supervisor Dr. Toni Falbo for guiding me in this report.

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## **Abstract**

### **Moral Responsibilities between Parent and Children through Lifespan in China**

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Abstract: The Chinese parent-child relationship is remarkably close throughout the lifespan. Parents get involved in planning their child's career, social activities, and even marriage. For their point, when adult children attain financial stabilities, they support aging parents in various ways. This report reviews this strong bond as a moral responsibility between parents and children that parents sacrifice for their children unconditionally. In return, children pay back their moral debts to parents by fulfilling filial piety, including doing well in school, respecting family members and supporting parents. However, the traditional parent-child relationship may have changed after the one-child policy due to the shift in family structure, and new roles of only children in the family. Thus, moral responsibilities continue to capture the attention of experts interested in family structure in general and Chinese society in past.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Danyang, a 13 year old girl lives in Beijing with her single mother. Danyang is the only child in her family, and her dad died in a work accident. Danyang is believed to be the best student in her school. Her teacher says “Danyang studies very hard and she is almost the No1. in all exams.” Dan yang told the author that, “my mom works so hard to pay my tuition and rent, I have to be the best for her. Because if I do well, I could get a good job, and support my mom. In that case, she won't have to work at all, you know, I am the only one can take care of her.”

-----quoted from “2010 BeiJing Student Annual Report”.

Danyang is one of a million Chinese only children, who were born after the implementation of the one-child policy. Their perspectives reflect the moral responsibilities between parent and child in Chinese culture. This paper explores the challenges facing both children and parents after the one-child policy, and estimates how it changed the traditional family functions and impacted the care of the elderly. This issue is associated with cultural schema, parent-child relationship development, emotion and motivation in psychological research.

Large amount of research have discussed the issue of traditional Chinese principles, one-child policy, and elderly care in recent. Here I review the recent literature looking at the moral responsibilities between parents and children throughout lifespan. I

found that traditional Chinese parent-child family obligation has been reshaped after the most influential intervention the one child policy. The changes created challenges for both parents and children in diverse ways, like increasing pressure of school performance, new family structure, and supporting elderly parents while struggling to raise their own child. In reviewing the literature from the last 30 years, I argue that scholars have focused only on the challenges and difficulties for either parents or children after the one-child policy. I suggest that now some new variables should be considered, such as western tendencies, new expectations from parents in caring issues, as well as the updated security systems from the government.

In this Introduction, I attempt to answer the following questions. What has happened in China in term of parent-child relationship? How do people talk about it? What is the problem? Why it is important? Who cares about the subject?

China is a country with 5000 years of history; it is comprised with a deep root of Confucianism, sincere respect of moral responsibilities, the religion of family obligation and incredible enthusiasm about education. Traditional Chinese families include senior parents, sons with their siblings, grandchildren and daughters-in-law. Elderly parents most likely relocate with their oldest son, particularly married son (Chang, 1999, Ofstedal, Knodel, & Chayovan, 1999; Sun & Liu, 1994). The strong spiritual support from family numbers is emphasized in Chinese culture; it is a gradually formed family centered society. Filial piety is more accurately rendered as "filial subordination": when

wills clashed, it was expected (and legally enforced) that the will of a family superior should prevail over the will of a family inferior. Siblings shared the duties, including financial support and daily assistance of elderly parents. In 1979, the most influential and unique intervention was implemented in China, the “one-child policy”, thereby changing the traditional family structure was changed, and the relationship between parent-child.

In recent China, the case of Danyang (Beijing Student Annual Report, 2010) is stereotypical of only children in China, who have struggled with adapting the new role as the first generation of only children and surviving through the consequences of the enforced one-child policy. The one-child policy launched China in 1979 as a legal approach to control the over-population problem. Each couple is only allowed to have one child; the violation of the policy would cause loss of employment, housing, and all state wide benefits (Potts, 2006). This policy prevents overpopulation and improves the quality of population. It consists of restrictions on family size, late marriage, childbearing and spacing of children when second children are permitted (Wang & Fong, 2009). Thus, Chinese families are motivated to give all hope and expectation to their only children, who maintain the provision of financial support and related filial obligation to their elder parents in their late years. This has enhanced excessive attention to only children, which play important roles in shaping new parent-only child relationships in China. Parents are no longer asking help for housework from their only child, and no longer favoring one child over another one. The only children become the center of the family, and receive absolute priority. As a result, researchers, like Thompson (1974) commended only



children as “ selfish” and “ maladjusted”; Wang & Fong (2009) in a paper entitled “ Little emperors and the 4:2:1 generation : China's singletons” stated that after only-child policy, urban Chinese youth are seen as the generation of “ little sun” and “ little emperors”.

However there have been no consistent and efficient research studies to prove the characteristic problems of only children. After the late 1970s, the studies of single children have emphasized more neutral or desirable aspects. In 1984, Falbo's review of only child studies concluded that Chinese onlies were no worse off than children with siblings, except intelligence disadvantage to first or second borns of two or three child families. Tao (1988) stated that only children even had higher levels of achievement.

Regardless of the attention and investment toward only children, the prevalence of depression and anxiety also has appeared to only children who cannot handle pressure. High expectations from parents, extreme emphasis of academic performance, being the “only hope” in the family, all of these become unprecedented burdens to Chinese singletons. In consequence, student suicides due to school problems have captured the concern of educators. Chinese only children have faced intense academic competition from primary school to the University Entrance Examination. In other words, the overloaded homework, demanding class curriculum, public record of grade scores increase students' depression and stress.

Overall, the one-child policy is controversial because it caused an increase of abandoned daughter, underreporting children, and high rate of abortion as the result of

son preference in rural areas. On the other hands, after the only child policy, the traditional son preference has shifted, and daughters have more opportunities for education, property ownership and legal equality.

## **Overview**

### **Chapter 1-Introduction**

This chapter provides the status of Chinese only children, addressing the challenges for both children and parents after the one-child policy, and introduces how it changed the traditional family functions. This chapter also outlines the structure of entire master report, revealing the reasons for my interest of this report as an original contribution.

### **Chapter 2 – Traditional Parental Responsibilities and Filial Piety**

This chapter describes traditional Chinese philosophy, as Confucianism. Confucianism guides the spirit of primary Chinese, influencing parent-child relationship. The cultural pattern of moral responsibilities determines individuals' attitudes and actions within families, and reflects the importance family support. Meanwhile, the distinctive features of Chinese filial piety are organized as “do well in school”, “respect family members” and “support aging parents”. The significant patrilineal lineage of Chinese family clan is believed to be the essential factor shaping Chinese filial obligation. Ultimately, I use a cross-culture study of elder parents' expectations toward adult children among different racial groups to facilitate the comparison of Chinese values. The

purpose of the comparison is to point out elder expectations with respect to moral responsibilities, economics, and living convenience.

### **Chapter 3- One-child Policy and Only Child Review**

This chapter introduces the one-child policy, including the reasons for launching this policy, historical context, economic difficulties. It explains how the one-child policy was implemented, interpreting both the difficulties and success in one-child policy. In second section of this chapter based on a literature review of only child studies, the conclusion combines early research from 1970s and recent research. The purpose of reviewing only children's characteristic traits is to provide fair judgment with scientific evidence and consistent results. That is, the comprehensive reviews of only children generally discuss three areas, such as intelligence, achievement, and interpersonal styles. Additionally, depression associated with negative consequences of one-child policy is stated as serious pressure for only children.

### **Chapter 4- Interaction of Parent-Child Relationship and One-child Policy**

Unintended consequences from the one-child policy are emphasized, representing the interaction of parent-child relationship. Chinese descent is patrilineal, which means that traditionally descent was calculated through male links only (the same way that surnames have traditionally descended only through male links in Euroamerican society). One-child policy prevents the possibility of having at least one son in the family, and has unintended consequences, such as underreporting of children, and abandoned daughters.

However, this policy creates the special generation of only children as sandwich generation, in which two couples need to support four elderly parents, and one child. It becomes impossible for the sandwich generation as the only two couples to afford responsibilities for taking care four grandparents with financial expense and daily assistance, as well as raising the one child with all pressures. Thus, care of the elderly is discussed, with the difficulties in rural systems and the tendency of new values among parent-child relationship. For example, elderly parents in urban China prepare saving and plans ahead of retirement, less dependence from adult children. Unfortunately, the serious elderly issues in rural areas still stay unsolved, with governments and community organizations generating different policies to meet the needs of those aging parents.

## **Chapter 5- Conclusion**

The last chapter provides a summary of the filial piety and moral responsibilities in Chinese families reviewed in the report. It implicates solutions for elderly care in current China, including the solutions in social insurance systems in rural areas and new tendencies among elderly.

Because government created various systems to support the elderly after retirement, senior population in urban China are covered with medical care, pension, nursing homes and related benefits. In contrast, challenges for rural elderly may involve low and unstable income, incapable to afford prepaid fund for social insurance. Potential

solutions are recommended, such as lowering the accumulative fees before retirement, and creating more availability in care center. In the meantime, aging parents are encouraged to be more independent from their adult children, preparing their own arrangements after retirement.

## **Chapter 2: Moral Responsibilities in Chinese Parent-Child Relationship**

### **TRADITIONAL CHINESE VIEW OF PARENTS' MORAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### **Chinese Philosophy**

Confucianism is the primary philosophical guide for Chinese culture, and it forms a duty-bound set of obligations to restrict social norms. Confucianism is comprised of three elements “*ren*, *yi*” and “*li*”. *Ren* present an obligation of altruism and humaneness for other individuals within a community, *yi* is the upholding of righteousness and the moral disposition to do well, and *li* is a system of norms and propriety that determines how a person should properly act within a community (Yum, 2007). In Confucian philosophy, relationships, particularly those between family members, are characterized as reciprocal such that each individual family member accumulates debts and credits throughout life and even after death.

#### **Chinese Parenting**

Most Chinese parents see their actions as family obligation, which refers to a collection of attitudes and behaviors related to the provision of support, assistance, and respect to family members (Fuligni & Zhang, 2004). Emphasis is placed in Chinese societies on dimensions such as a belief in the need to repay parents for their efforts of

raising the children, a willingness to make sacrifices for the sake of the family, and a respect for the authority of the family ( Ho, 1996; Huang, 1989; yang, 1989). Chinese parents are motivated to do everything they can for children, so that their children do well in school and become successful adults. Chinese parents place high value on the accomplishments of their children, which they believe reflect honor onto themselves and their ancestors.

As the main source of social mobility, education is highly valued by Chinese parents, since Confucianism values became accepted across China, more than 2000 years ago, and education has been the vehicle for social mobility for peasants and the poor. Education achievement potentially changes the social status of the family. Because of these values, Chinese parents place importance on education spending a tremendous amount of time and money to ensure their children's educational outcomes are no worse than that of comparable others. Parents start saving money when their children are still very young, and even with meager incomes, they squeeze savings out of food and clothing money, over a period of many years to save money to invest in their children's education. Parents also spend hours in the evenings and during the weekends to coach their children, giving up their own entertainment and holidays. While some parents study the textbooks that are taught in school so that they can coach their children better, others even enroll in adult education programs to enable themselves to understand the school materials (Lin & Cheng, 1995).

Even parents with very limited recourses do not hesitate to pay expensive tuition

for private schools for their children. For example, Chinese parents typically choose far away private schools, because they perceive the academic environment as better for their children than that offered by local schools.

In the past, Chinese parents are even under obligation to pay children's expensive college tuition, living expense, pre-marital housing and grandchildren's daycare cost for adult children. Most Chinese college students do not take on any part-time jobs or undergraduate internship unless the school requires. Some Chinese mothers still help college students with their laundry, cooking during school vacations and Chinese festivals.

## **TRADITIONAL VIEW OF FILIAL OBLIGATION THROUGH THE LIFE SPAN**

### **Do Well In School**

In exchange of executing family obligations, Chinese teens develop the capacity to provide direct support to their families and learn the skills that closely facilitate their future productive roles (Fuligini&Zhang, 2004). Education has historically played a central role in Chinese society, and it is competitive to get into top universities based on the scores of annual National Unified College and University Entrance Exam. Parents and teachers obsess about students getting high scores on examinations, and schools are rated by the numbers of students who go on to higher educational institutions. Therefore,



Chinese parents are highly inspired to prepare their children for the annual exam. Parents use multiple methods to monitor children's daily activities, expressing their high expectations for only children, and investing great efforts consistently for educating and supporting school related tasks. Chinese children face huge pressure from school to meet high standards and from parents to succeed in school. For Chinese students, trying hard and doing well in school are generally considered their primary duties in Chinese families, and children who exhibit educational success bring honor and respect to their families (Chao & Tseng, 2002). Along with this value come academic attitudes and behavior, utility of education, values of mathematics and Chinese language, educational aspiration. Compared to Western students who pursue academic grades more intrinsically, Chinese students want to please parents and meet their expectations. In addition, Chinese high school students experience demanding academic regimens that lead to a national college entrance examinations given once a year. Every year on July 7, 8, 9, millions of Chinese children are engaged in an intense, nerve-wrecking battle during the annual National Unified College and University Entrance Exam (Lin & Chen, 1995). Eligibility to enter top colleges is based on this test, and the results of the tests determine future economic opportunities in society. The importance of getting into top universities indicates students' potential ability to support family.

The situation is similar in a country with a similar culture, Japan:

The flow is simple: in order to get a good job, one has to get into a good university. In order to get into a good university, one must do well on the entrances

examination. In order to do well on the entrance examination, one must study very hard, and for many years. Thus, testing is important for Japanese students because it ultimately determines their quality of life. (Ogura, 1987, p. 27)

Most Chinese youth must dedicate their lives to prepare their achievement for success on the college entrance exam. Not surprisingly, Chinese parents enroll their children into Chinese, Math and English classes outside of school, in Primary school, and continue intensive training until the Entrance Exam is completed. Therefore, most Chinese students study and stay up to midnight, stressed by academic scores and academic ranking. A great number of Chinese students believe that if they fail in school, it will bring shame on the family clan and disappoint parents. In return to appreciate parents' effort, teen children consider their responsibility as obtaining good scores in all kinds of exams, on all subjects, giving away play time, locking up leisure-time magazines, curtailing TV time, restricting outdoor play (Lin & Chen, 1995). In Jungreis-Wolff (2011), it stated that “Chinese children never get a B. But if they would, there would be a screaming, hair-tearing explosion.”

### **Respect of Family Members**

Chinese parents expect unquestioning obedience from their children, and they tell their children what they should do to meet their expectations (Holroyd, 2003). The violations of parents' orders may result in scolding, beating, withholding food, among other things (Lin & Chen, 1995).

In Chuang's (2011) paper, she stated that Chinese parents use control and punishment strategies to obtain absolute obedience from their children. Both Chinese teen and adult children with the impact of Confucianism consider consistent rightness of parents, appreciating parents' wellness as essential to self-motivation. In return for parents' efforts in raising them and given opportunities in life, children acclaim parents' selfless sacrifice by tolerating all orders.

Agreement with all parental orders is important in all aspects to Chinese children, even in adults' marriage. In ancient years, Chinese marriages were completely arranged by parents regardless of the wishes from bride and bridegroom. The parents of both sides would meet first, followed by evaluating the compatibility of family economic backgrounds, social networking, educational history, or political purposes. Most marrying couples had no chance to know their partners' physical appearance, personalities, and living styles before the wedding night. Riley (1994) stated that the purpose of marriage in Chinese society were many and included the transfer of rights over the bride, continuance of a family line, a way to increase hands in the field (Croll, 1984), formation of alliances (Ebrey, 1991), a way to make a statement of class standing (Ebrey, 1991), provision of old age support and security, and the transfer of resources from one family to another (Croll, 1984). Ultimately, in the past, marriage was under the near-absolute control of family elders and was considered an important part of a family's strategy for success (Riley, 1994). Currently young people have more liberty in selecting spouses and less

control from parents. Adult children are open to meet their loved ones in college or work places, but parental permissions and blessing are also essential in the success of marriage. Still, some adult daughters see marriage as the stereotype of filial obligation that their marriage should build benefit for their aging parents first, assisting household (Ho, 1996).

### **Support Aging Parents**

Under the impact of Confucianism, the Chinese consider placing parents in a nursing home as a violation of traditional filial obligations (Kao & Stuifbergen, 1999). Most parents in Taiwan continue to live with their adult children, particular their married sons (Chang, 1999, Ofstedal, Knodel, & Chayovan, 1999; Sun & Liu, 1994). In traditional Chinese families, aging parents, especially after the death of one parent relocate to their adult children's home. The oldest son mostly takes responsibilities to nurse and assist the aging parents. Meanwhile, other siblings in the family are expected to contribute financial support of aging parents, even if this support creates a potential economic hardship.

In other words, filial obligations vary by adult children's financial availabilities and time flexibilities. For example, siblings with greater financial resources would be exempt from the duty of labor serving instead of more provision of financial support. For siblings with more flexibility of assistance with daily activities, they would stay with aging parents and receive other siblings' financial support (Lin, et al 2003). Unlike

typical filial piety in Chinese families, Filey (1989) found little evidence of elderly caring in American families.

### **Cross Cultural Comparison: American Elderly Parents' Expectation of Filial Responsibility**

Chinese children are seen as morality in debt to their parents throughout their lifespan. These debts included family obligations to do well in school, respect family members and to assist parents when they are elderly. Does this filial responsibility only exist in Chinese culture? It is interesting to compare the sense of family obligation across multiple racial groups, from the parents' expectations to understand relationships between child and parent.

In Seelbach's (1978) study of U.S. parents and children, the results revealed that no racial differences in types of expectations or in levels of support provided. Gender differences were found and showed that female elders were more likely to live with their adult children instead of staying alone. Additionally, parents' marital status, health condition and income impacted the possibility of receiving support (Mancini & Blieszner, 1989). Among those, adults agreed that children should help their aging parents, and help them with their medical expense. Elderly Americans believe that such filial responsibilities should not be forced on their adult children.

Interestingly, a recent trend indicates that under the pressure of economics, underemployed or divorced adult children return to parental home to share the household (Mancini & Blieszner, 1989). Adult children are eager for social support and daycare for

their own children.

In the U.S., parents are expected to provide their children with affection, physical sustenance, socialization, and recreation. In return, children are expected to be obedient to their parents, participate in education, and attain appropriate social skill.

## **Chapter 3: ONE-CHILD POLICY**

### **What is One-Child Policy**

China's one-child-per-couple fertility policy, implemented in 1980, is almost thirty years old. Launched as an emergency measure to slow population growth at the start of Chinese economic reforms, this policy is the largest and most extreme social experiment in population growth control via government intervention in human reproduction in world history (Wang, 2005). Chinese residents who resist this policy with an unauthorized second birth face the loss of the couple's employment, housing allotment, and other state-controlled resources. However, some situations are exceptional, for example, if the firstborns are physically handicapped, parents could argue for a second child; Remarried couple may be able to have another child, only if each of them did not have a child from a previous marriage. Parents who come from ethnic minorities are eligible for second children.

### **Why was One-Child Policy Implemented**

Before the One child policy, China still had one million more births than deaths every five weeks (Potts, 2006). The rapid rate of population growth roots had its from Mao Zedong's belief that more people meant additional numbers for the fight against capitalism and for building a stronger socialist state. Later, his manifesto became “the more people, the stronger we are” and populated among Chinese. The warnings of

Chinese Neo-Malthusians were stifled and, as a result, the population nearly doubled over the next 25 years (Zhang & Goza, 2006). But Mao underestimated the fact that people consume resources, such as food, housing and materials, the growth of productivity could not satisfy the demands of consumption. Therefore, after the victory of 1959, the Chinese people finally achieved peace and began the procedure trying to improve their standard of living. Overpopulation was gradually exhausting China and Chinese people's living standard. The Chinese government attempted to reduce population growth culminating. In 1979, the Chinese State Council launching of the policy under the guidance of Deng Xiao-ping who was the president of China. Specifically for Chinese society, the implantation of the One Child Policy not only aimed to prevent overpopulation, but also to improve the qualities of families' living conditions. This policy was able to focus on providing more access to resources for each family, including educational opportunities, financial support, and infrastructure.

### **Difficulties in One-Child Policy**

Since the implementation of one-child policy by Chinese government, there have been both positive and negative consequences. On one hand, the one-child policy has been successful in reducing the rate of population. On the other hand, the policy has had negative effects on the influence of girls in China. The skewed sex ratio of male live births to female live birth was 1.03, but had increased to 1.17 in 2011 (Hesketh, Lu & Zhu, 2005). Each successive birth cohort is smaller and because women tend to marry men who are older, fewer potential brides are available than grooms (Potts, 2006). Son



preference has been embedded in Chinese values, and the one child policy increased the rate of sons born, usually by use ultrasound. For parents who have no access to technology or pre-test for the sex of birth. In the future, this social tendency influenced significantly in under-registration of female births, latterly as higher mortality for girls due to greater neglect (Potts, 2006). Undoubtedly, the one child policy has changed Chinese traditional family relationships between parents and children. Aging parents are facing serious problems as after retirement and medical costs in late years. With sharply reduced ratio of younger generation, the elderly parents are concerned with limited assistance from their only children, difficulties in getting benefits from government programs in rural China, medical insurance and nursing home. (Zhang & Goza, 2006). Additionally, the higher ratio of aged population and lower ratio of young population contributes to uncertainty regarding how elderly problems in the future will be cared for.

According to Potts (2006), Chinese people were unhappy about being limited to have one child only; some argued that according fertility in this way was immoral. Abortion became more common to avoid penalty. Furthermore, children grow up without living with other teens or lacking in moral character. In 1974, Thompson's paper described the "only-child status" as "a disease itself". However, research findings regarding the personality traits of only children have been inconsistent and some studies have suggested no difference between only children and those with siblings (Falbo & Polit, 1986). On the one hand, being an only child has lead to greater awareness of family obligation, because that means to take all the family support themselves. On the other

hand, researchers have expressed the concern of single children may grow up with individualism and become self-centered, because parents over spoil and tolerate single children.

### **Success in One-Child Policy**

Encouraged by the one-child policy, China's economy would not have grown by 7-8 % a year over past decades; such growth has lifted an unprecedented 150 million people out of the abject poverty (Potts, 2006). From 1971 to 1990, the total fertility rate was reduced from 5.81 to 2.31, particularly successful in urban area (Tsui & Rich, 2002). In major cities, like Shanghai, Tianjin, and Beijing, the one-child rates ranged between 86 and 96 percent in 1990 (*Beijing/Tianjin/Shanghai/Guangzhou comparison 1992; China Statistical yearbook 1998*). Although, educated urban women in all cultures prefer fewer children, urban China would not have achieved such a high one-child rate so quickly without the one-child policy (Cai, Zhou, and Li 1991; Guo and Choe 1991; Milwertz 1997; Wang 1996). In urban area, the one-child policy expected women participating in the economy and women's employment increase household incomes (Tsui & Rich, 2002).

Regardless of all the criticism and negative consequences, the One-child policy played a significant role to control population growth and it is essential factor in the economic growth. Parents were also able to provide enough resources for their children's education. Others have argued that traditional gender biases were weakened and girls have been provided with more chances to receive education, and employment

opportunity. In past decades, Chinese females' primary responsibilities was seen as producing sons for continuing family clan, for those who were not able to give male offspring to the husbands' family were despised. In feudal families, most judgments toward daughters-in-law are demanding and women live with intense pressure. Unfortunately, some women's destiny in rural areas still depends on fertility ability. Because of the aspect of son preference, some older daughters become victims and suffered in family abuse, taking duties of heavy housework in early years.

## **ONLY CHILDREN RESEARCH**

The characteristics of only children have been the subject of research for a long time (Falbo, & Polit, 1986). In the U.S., there is an only child stereotype that perceives them as “selfish”, “lonely”, and “maladjusted” (Thompson, 1974).

### **Intelligence**

In 1984, Falbo presented her paper “The only child: A review” to see if the popular assumptions about only child had any significant merit. Most only child studies was based on the birth order situation that researchers use first borns to study only children, rather than directly focusing on the appearance of an only child. In Falbo’s paper, intelligence, achievement, and interpersonal orientation were discussed. She stated that intelligence is the only topic area in which consistent and reliable results about only children are available. Only children have an IQ advantage over children from large families. However, because only children have fewer chances to tutor younger children,

some have argued that only children do not attain the highest status in learning of intelligence.

### **Achievement**

Only children, firstborns, and children from small families have an advantage in terms of achievement, according to quantitative reviews of the literature (Falbo & Polit, 1986). This achievement advantage may be due to the higher intelligence of only children, firstborns, and children with just one sibling. Also, families may have more economic resources to send these children to colleges, comparing to those later borns or from larger families. Only borns' childhood experiences with family may develop achievement-related personality, since parents' expectation towards mature behavior affect children's achievement motivation and accelerate the acquisition of adult-like behavior. Either firstborns or only borns can more easily acquire personality predispositions conducive to the exercise of leadership (Falbo, 1984).

### **Sociability**

In Falbo & Polit (1986) study, 115 published studies based on birth order and family size literature that included only children were reviewed. The number of only borns present in each study ranged from 10 to 78, 000, 3% samples are preschool, 16% are grammar school, 22% are grammar and high school combined, 24% are junior and senior school, 10% are college, 24% adult and 1% are unknown age. Based on study (1986), when the sociability data were based on self-report (e.g., need for affiliation

scales), only borns scored lower than others. In contrast, when the sociability data were based on the evaluations of others (e.g., peer rating), only borns scored as high as non-only borns.

These results could be interpreted that because only borns spend more time without the companion of siblings, or more presence of adults than do other children, the only borns may involve with more mature activities, a given example as reading or collecting stamp. Claudy (1984) also reported that only borns spent more time in intellectual activities and less time in group-oriented and practical activities than did children with siblings based on survey of 3,221 high school students in 1960. In the other hand, Conner (1963) explained that only borns have lowered need for affiliation may due to receive large amount affections from parents. Because the excessive attentions from parents reduce the only borns' motivation to affiliate with others, only borns reported lower scores of sociability on self-report (Connors, 1963).

### **Developmental Outcomes**

Thus, in intelligence, achievement and character, only children excel beyond non-only children, especially those in large-size families. In terms of the character, Falbo & Polit (1986) found that only borns had more desirable personalities than all non-only borns and people from medium and large families. These results indicate that only borns are at the same level of sociability and adjustment as their peers with siblings.

## **Depression**

Several studies have claimed that Chinese only children tend to feel more depressed than North American Children (Crystal et al., 1994; Shek, 1991). Depression was consistently found in the correlation with academic failure, difficulties in peer relationships, and poor parenting practices, such as parental acceptance and responsiveness (Chen., X, Rubin., H. K, & Li., B, 1995). The level of depression may be associated with stressful social and academic environment in Chinese schools.

Media has frequently reported that only children in China are likely to experience depressed mood and consequences such as suicide, aggressive behaviors, and bullying. Because the only children are seen as the “only hope” in the families, parents put all their expectations toward their only children. Thus, only children have to raise their social competence to stand out among their peers and impress their parents. Comparing with children with siblings, the pressure and attention from parents may be interrupted by siblings. Children who had academic difficulties and were rejected by their mothers were likely to develop depression; however, children who had low academic achievement but were accepted by their mothers were not depressed at later times (Chen., X, Rubin., H. K, & Li., B, 1995). However, Chen et al. (1995) indicated that family variables and only children depression were statistically nonsignificant. The study explained that child development such as cognitive and affective process can buffer and delay the influence from family stress and resources; as only children become older and more mature, they are more capable of coping with problems and looking for help. Additionally, cultural

factors in China play roles in only children's depression. Children's psychological problems as internal conditions are rarely cared for by educators and the public in China.

Finally, inconsistent with previous reports indicating that Chinese only children report a higher level of depressed mood than their North American counterparts, Chinese only children are seen as equally related to depression (Chen et al, 1995). Thus, the concerns of only children in China would be more vulnerable to greater depression was not supported.

## **Chapter 4: INTERACTION OF ONE-CHILD POLICY AND PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP**

The One-child policy is controversial in China, and it has raised warning signs of high cost and consequences of such unprecedented policy, including human rights violations, especially regarding women; the forceful alternation of China's traditional family structure; an imbalanced sex ratio, due to a preference for sons; and a rapidly growing number of elderly citizens. Meanwhile, since this policy forbids parents from having multiple children, it increases the chance to promote parenting quality towards childbearing, educating, and investigating.

### **UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES FROM ONE-CHILD POLICY**

#### **Son Preference**

China is a patrilineal society, where the main productive assets are passed through the male line, and sons bear the primary responsibilities of continuing the descent line of the father's family (Lin, et al., 2003). For most Chinese, maintaining the lineage is fundamental, if a man does not have any sons, he may adopt one or take another wife to reach his objective (Guota et al. nd). As a result, it is preferable for families to have sons instead of daughter, as they will be sure that the lineage will be maintained and the property will stay in the family. In traditional China, women move to their husbands' clan after get married, and are seen as a way to continue the lineage by giving births to son. In another hand, women who fail to produce sons intensely disappoint the family and result



into frequently blame and abuse. Thus, after the implementation of one-child policy, couples who avoid the penalty from government would use technology to test the gender of birth ahead and choose to either proceed with abortion or maintain pregnancy based on gender reference. The son preference contributes to the imbalanced sex ratio and high rates of abortion.

### **Abandoned Daughters**

In early times, the abandonment of girls was strongly associated with poverty and, predictably, the numbers of such children grew dramatically in times of famine and economic hardship. But after government's population control, orphanages reported that their numbers increased greatly (Johnson, 1993). Furthermore, Johnson (1993) argued that the large majority of abandoned infants were female. As reflected in the skewed sex ratio, most girls die before they are registered. Many girls survive, but are not legally registered and some have to “hide” in many ways, until they are adopted or placed into foster care. Since the one-child policy, adoptions have mainly involved infant girls (Waltner, 1990). A large number of female infants live secretly without legal identities, working at early ages to support their “legal” brothers' school tuition and families' living expenses.

### **Child Underreporting**

Child underreporting is often neglected in the studies of fertility and sex ratio imbalance in China. Since the early 1970s, parents who violated birth restrictions have

been subjected to fines and penalties. Moreover, following a 1991 central decree (Xinhua 1991), such penalties were increasingly enforced against officials who failed to limit fertility in their jurisdictions (Aird 2004; Goodkind 2004; Greenhalgh, Zhu, and Li 1994; Merli 1998; Merli and Raftery 2000; Scharping 2003; Smith et al. 1997; Tan 1998; Zeng 1996). China's fertility policies thus provide a powerful incentive for both parents and officials to underreport out-of-quota births as well as children (Attane 2001; Feeney and Yuan 1994; Merli 1998; Scharping 2007; Smith 1994). Goodkind (2011) research of sex distortions produced some findings; first, Goodkind concluded that the propensity to use sex selection may have already declined in China. Second, distorted sex ratios in 1.5-child areas seem to lead to underreporting of daughters, compliance with sex-linked stopping rules, policy-selection effects, ethnic composition, and other factors. These indicate a re-consideration of 1.5 child policies that whether this policy causes more prenatal sex selection. Third, China's birth planning system contributed to sex ratio distortions via the 1.5 child stopping rule and daughter underreporting, otherwise, distortions itself from prenatal sex selection may have peaked at lower levels. In Goodkind's study, he addressed that the same evidence implies that child underreporting more than doubled between the 1990 and 2000 censuses to levels much higher than elsewhere in Asia.

### **Sandwich Generations**

The Sandwich generation is defined as the first generation of only children who become parents themselves. They are sandwiched because the couple make up of only

children are expected to support their four parents and their children (Zhang & Goza, 2006). On one hand, the oldest parents without retirement funds or medical insurance completely depend on the first generation of adult only-children. On the other hand, the adult only- parents must invest their income in their children, so that they can grow up to be productive adults who will care for them in the future. Failure to support children or parents will violate traditional family ties, filial responsibilities, or risk loneliness in future. Consequently, the sandwich generations experience stress and extremely high expectations and are drawn into unhealthy social environments where they only live for paying moral debts to senior parents and support their only-children.

### **Only Children Pressure**

From the outset of the one-child policy, there was concern that Chinese parents might over-indulge their only children (Wang & Fong, 2009). The only children were thought to become the center of the family and receive excessive attention and high expectations from parents and grandparents. The only child generation was seen as “little emperor”, that these singletons have been treated well by their parents, receiving opportunities and luxuries unknown to previous generations. Since onlies become the unique adult children who are responsible for maintaining family honor and assistance to aging parents, parents are pressured to raise the only children to meet high standards and expectations. Therefore, this phenomenon caused a unique parent-child relationship in China.

In general, birth-order researchers have reported that parents of firstborns are

anxious, and respond to their childcare duties with more anxiety (Falbo, 1984). At the same time, only children are like firstborns in that both receive their parents' undivided attention during their early lives. These excessive parental attentions potentially stimulate negative outcomes in Chinese children. Media reports that Chinese singletons struggle with depression and anxiety because they are their family's "only hope", and crumbled under the daily pressure to succeed (Wang & Fong, 2009). The unanimous mission of Chinese students is to do well in educations and enter top universities for seeking good future. To make sure that their children have sufficient time to study, they take charge of all household chores, so much so that it is reported many children cannot perform even simple domestic chores (Xue Suzhen & Xiao She, 1992). In addition, there is concern that growing up alone within families leads to the development of poor social communication and cooperation skills (Falbo, 1997). This concern in China is similar to concerns expressed in the U.S. that only children are selfish, lonely, and maladjusted (Tompson, 1974). However, research studies in this topic have yielded mixed results (Falbo & Polit, 1986; Wang & Fong, 2009).

### **Social Judgments toward Only Children's Abilities after College**

Some studies of only children as young adults suggest that they have weaknesses. Wu (2002) conducted a study in Chongqing, China, sampling the comments from managers about their only child employees in 100 local companies. They reported that 81% managers were disappointed by adult only children's work performance and cooperation skills. The top five weakness were lack of hardworking (75%), practical

ability (68%) , logical analysis (46%), social relationships (44%), and creativity (42%) (Wu, 2002).

Part of the problem involves traditional Chinese values and methods of education. Only children are taught to memorize the right answers and write in right ways. In addition, in traditional Chinese educational systems, teachers and parents emphasize students' grade and exam scores more than the knowledge itself. I quote from a 6<sup>th</sup> grade student,

“I don't understand what it means, but I know as long as I could remember the definition, I could get good score and my mom would be happy.”

Ultimately, since only children are indulged by family members somehow, their self-evaluation is exaggerated in current society. Most college students believe that they can accomplish anything with effort. Unfortunately, only children are perceived to lack effort because they depend on their parents for everything. When only children enter the practical world, they behave less patiently and pay more attention to results rather than progress. Meanwhile, only children are characterized in Chinese media as school smart but not social smart.

## **ELDERLY CARE**

### **Difficulties in Rural Systems**

Since the birth control program that occurred in 1979, Chinese population structure has changed in term of the increasing portion of aging group and decreasing fertility. Traditional Chinese family ties and residential patterns are experiencing many transformations. As the development of demographic changes, significant economic transformations impact both urban and rural areas. Fuligni and Zhang (2004)'s research had 708 participants that half of them were only children from urban China and half of them from rural China with or without siblings (Only child policy was relaxed in rural areas). The participants are around age 16.6-18.9 and were tested the adolescents' family characteristics after the shift from market economy, including family obligation, current assistance, and respect to family, future support, family relationship, academic attitudes and behavior. Half of his sample come from urban areas and lived with families when they attend school. While half of his participant are from rural China and mostly classified as peasants. The results show that regardless the differences in economic and social changes, both urban and rural adolescents report strong sense of obligation to support, assist, and respect the authority if their families. However, Fuligni & Zhang did find a weaken sense of family obligation from urban male adolescents. Therefore, economic transitions affect boys but not girls.

Regarding government policies for socioeconomic development and demographic

transitions, aging issues are facing both urban and rural China. The urban residents received many forms of favorable treatment, and pre-existing rural-urban income gaps become even more pronounced (Zhang & Goza, 2006). Therefore, general aging situation is similar in both rural and urban, but the differences in economic status determine the differences for the elderly.

According to a 1992 survey, 73.73% of the elderly were involved in pension-available institutions in urban areas. But in rural areas, only 5.88% of the elderly could get pensions when they retired, and 94% did not (Qiao, 2011). Even though the general aging trend is similar in both rural and urban areas in China, but the specific aging problems varies differently due to the different socioeconomic institutions. The system in rural areas was unique that no other countries would share the similar problems as these in rural China. Qiao quoted the primary differences between rural and urban China:

“Urban residents who work in enterprises and institutions receive regular monthly income, while rural residents’ income is based on agricultural work, which is unstable and lower.

Due to the registration system, rural residents have limits to be employed in urban areas; therefore, most people stay in rural areas.

Urban areas provide more advanced public facilities, such as communication systems, traffic systems, cultural activities, and health and medical systems.

Enterprises or institutions in urban areas secure retirees' monthly pensions, so residents have no anxiety about income in later life. In contrast, rural residents have no dependency on financial security from previous employers, and they mostly perform on physical work."

For elderly in rural areas, there are limited options for supporting themselves in late years, including savings from previous years, or facility from their adult children. Unfortunately, rural residents' annual incomes base on agricultural industry, which means unstable and primary labor work. As a result, aging parents' own savings easily exhaust and decrease as their age increased. However, this fact enhances more dependence on their adult children. After the elderly entire lose physical ability to continue labor work, adult children are taking responsibility for financial support. Therefore, more adult children contribute more assistance to parents, meanwhile adult children feel less pressure if more siblings to share the financial burden. The declining numbers of children in rural families along with the lack of infrastructure, poverty, and labor outflow make the aging problem more serious than that in urban areas (Qiao, 2011). It is impossible for rural elderly solve the problems by solely depend on family support.

After the implementation of one child policy, government realized the difficulties of aging issues in rural China. Since families are lowering the fertility to fulfill citizen obligations, corresponding social systems should be provided. Contrary to family support, the government and social organizations generate two social facilities for the



elderly, including social relief and social insurance. Social relief began in 1956, is organized by country or collective organizations to help the elderly who have no ability to do physical work, no living sources, and no children or relatives (Qiao, 2011). The elderly who received collective organization supports could choose either stay in “elderly home” in countries or live in their own homes. In the late 1980s, the government initiated a pilot experiment of rural social insurance (Qiao, 2011). However, the needs for aging rural residents in China are integrated with socioeconomic and institutional context. The problematic issues become unique and difficult for social insurance to execute.

First, the funds for the insurance are accumulated from participants themselves, since the country was reluctant to contribute money, therefore, only the rich have ability to participate insurance program. Secondly, the benefits of insurance program covers the young people rather than the middle-aged and elderly population; third, inadequate of professional insurance organizations to manage foundation in rural areas; fourth, less than 1% insurance-target population participates the program, therefore, the cumulative funds provided very little money to support living expense when the participants reach elderly status (Qiao, 2011).

### **New Values among Parent-Child Relationship in China**

The globalization process affects the implementation of people’s values related to parent-child obligation, adapted new roles of parent and children, as well as the attitudes toward elderly care. This shifting may involve a re-interpretation of intergenerational

relationship. For example, as reported by the Five Cities' Marriage and Family Study (Liu and Xue, 1987), arranged marriage, one of the symbols of parental power over their children, has become history. Parent-child relations in China are becoming more egalitarian as members of the younger generations gain access to better paying jobs and begin to adopt more western attitudes toward their elderly care responsibilities (Yuan, 1987). In Zhang & Goza's study in 2006, most urban participants among 15 interviews from three locations in China accepted the fact that it will be impossible for single children to care for two parents and four grandparents. For this reason, most urban parents financially prepared to make non-traditional and independent plan when they are in late years. However, the majority of rural parents live with limited incomes still struggle with affording the financial plans for retirement.

The rapid economic growth, demographic change and occupational migration in China have attenuated the traditional values of filial obligation, but parent-child relationship still maintained close and adult children are primary support for elder care. In current China, preference for living with adult children for the elderly parents has also changed. Based on Ma et al. (1994), only about 25% of the respondents preferred to live with adult children, however, about 32.2% of them prefer to "live close by but not necessarily together", and other 14.5% even said "not necessarily live together ". This trend implied the independence from the aging parents in living arrangements. While, co-residence facilitates the core support of daily activities to the elderly, but new tendencies as living apart but with close and frequent connection between parents and

children is growing in China. Bian's et al. (1998) study in Shanghai and Tianjin found that 9% of non-co-resident children live in the same neighborhood (three minutes' walk away) as the parents, and 48% live within at least the same district (20 minutes' walk away). Therefore, the changing of attitudes and reality after one child policy has enforced the consciousness of independence for the elderly, and weakened the expectations of reciprocity between parents and children.

Chinese government has implemented several assistances for the elderly in their late years, as the financial and medical support programs after retirement, including social security system for workers of state owned units, regular pensions for retired workers, and medical care provision. Those systems are considered as vulnerable and vary from one work unit to another (Divis et al., 1995). Therefore, to secure the elderly care, government policies emphasize the legal obligations and responsibilities on family. I quoted:

“The Criminal Law (1979), Article 183, makes it an offense, punishable by a sentence of not more than five years' criminal detention, for adult children to refuse to perform their proper duty to support an aged family member. . . . The revised Marriage Law of 1980, Article 20 . . . also imposes similar responsibilities on adopted children.”

In recent years, community-based personal services for single elderly inhabitants in cities have been enthusiastically promoted by the government (Leung, 1997). Many

facilities have become available for the elderly who are in need, such as nursing homes, daycare, health services, and entertainment centers. “Three nos” elderly who are addressed by Sheng & Settle as no ability to work, no sources of income and no family support are primary beneficiaries from the community. Unfortunately, these communities are financially independent, and most resources are terminated by local availabilities. Hypothetically, the elderly are provided with limit conditions and live with the institutional support. In comparison with home care, the elderly in nursing home has less emotional connections and more difficulties to experience caring and qualified living facilities.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

Traditional Chinese values of parent-child relationship have been reshaped after the new structure of Chinese family with one child policy. Still, the essential virtues as doing well in school, respecting family members and supporting elderly parents are highly appreciated. However, challenges do appear for only child to support aging parents by themselves, along with the influence of Western tendencies. I argued that scholars should consider all the social changes, and unpredictable factors in Chinese parent-child relationship, which means the current Chinese parent-child moral responsibility has changed as the improvement of civil development rather than the unintended consequences of one child policy.

Chinese are highly inspired by Confucianism, exhibiting strong emphasis on social relationships and devotion to the hierarchical family relationship that are essence of Confucian doctrines. In East Asia whereas Confucianism is philosophical principles, the emphasis is on proper social relationship and their maintenance. For example, Chinese value system found that Confucian values of reciprocity and proper relationships was seen in two ways, either as a concern for a certain subset of people, or as a concern for a generalized collectivity of people (Yum, 2007). Because Confucianism was institutionalized in educational system, Confucian classics are required in class curriculum in textbooks in China. Confucianism exerts stronger influence than other

religions in China, since it is perceived as pragmatic, present-oriented, and more realistic. The Confucian values facilitate the relationship between parents and children, interpreting reciprocal benefits as moral responsibilities for children to pay back parents. Therefore, the moral and life-shaping influences over children from parents seem to bond family members together, and continue in generations. Chinese children perceive their filial piety, following by three principles, do well in school, respect family members, and support elderly parents. Since Chinese parents sacrifice their lives to invest in their children, preparing children's success in future, Chinese children are encouraged to follow absolute obedience from parents, especially academic performance in order to get into top universities.

Education has historically played a central role in Chinese society, and it is competitive to get into top universities based on the scores of annual National Unified College and University Entrance Exam. Chinese parents and teachers are obsessed with children's academic scores, and students are categorized by school ranking. Education is the main source of social mobility in China; the academic achievement can potentially change social status for family. Students with excellent grades are placed into top schools that lead to a bright future with well-paid jobs; average students go to lower level schools, for students who do poorly in school would have to end up with technical school which educate labor workers. It is extremely demanding to get top universities; students are required to study overtime through consistent years. The huge pressure from competition and parents' expectation are challenging for Chinese children, so that many

children teens are associated with depression, mental illness, result oriented and become slaves of study. For students who fail in school are seen the shame of family that indicate less ability to support family in future. Under the impact of Confucianism, failure of supporting parents is a violation of traditional filial obligation (Kao& Stuifbergen, 1999). Adult children provide financial resources and daily assistance to aging parenting. Siblings with greater financial resources would exempt duty of labor serving instead of more provision of financial support. For siblings with more flexibility of assistant with daily activities, they would stay with aging parents and receive other siblings' financial support (Lin, et al 2003).

Until 1979, the most influential intervention implanted in China that changed the traditional chinese values of parent-child relationships. In 1979, one-child policy launched in China to control overpopulation, so that each couple can only have one child, except the firstborns are physically handicapped, remarried couple lose custody from previous marriage or parents from ethnic minorities. The violation of one-child policy would cause serious legal consequences, such as loss of couple's employment, housing allotment, and other state-controlled resources. The one-child policy is controversial in China, and it raised warning signs of high cost and consequences of such unprecedented policy, including a rapidly growing number of elderly citizens and their caring issues, especially in rural China; the forceful alternation of China's traditional family structure; an imbalanced sex ratio, due to a preference for sons; underreporting children and abandonment of daughters. However, one-child policy reduces fertility that improved

economic development, efficient resources provision for only children in education and living conditions, and the equal opportunities for women.

Because of the one-child policy, adult children are facing difficulties in supporting four elderly parents and their own only children independently. It is challenging for one couple to take care elderly caring in either financial availabilities or daily assistance, since adult children struggle with working schedule, paying childbearing fees, educational investment, and elderly medical expense. Thus, the government is aware of the difficulties of aging issues in China, and provides social systems to share responsibilities of elderly caring. In terms of support, social relief and social insurances were generated in the year 1956 and year 1980 respectively (Qiao, 2011). According to Qiao (2011), country or collective organizations help the elderly who lose the ability to do physical work and living sources, and lose children or relatives to care for. Urban residents receive forms of favorable treatment from social insurance, based on the survey in 1992, 73.73% of the elderly were involved in pension-available institutions in urban areas. But in rural areas, only 5.88% of the elderly could get pensions when they retired. This phenomenon could be explained that rural residents' low incomes are not able to afford cumulative fund before retirement; therefore, those individuals are not eligible for the benefits of social insurances. As a result of such problem, the rural elderly are not secured by social insurance plan.

As the globalization process affects the implantation of individuals' values related



to parent-child obligation, Western tendencies build new attitudes toward the elderly care. According to Ma et al. (1994), more aging parents prefer to live close to adult children rather than relocating together. In Zhang & Goza (2006), majority urban participants understood that it is impossible for single children take care of two parents and four grandparents. The evidences indicate that the elderly prepare less dependence on their children.

Most researches among Chinese moral responsibilities between parents and children involve either the cultural patterns as Confucianism or social relationship. The parent-child relationship has been shifting, because of the challenges and consequences of the one-child policy. However, Chinese family structure become different and smaller after the birth control policy, children adapt new roles in the families. Most likely, Chinese educational systems are introduced with Western values, such as English Literature, Western Art, values of individualism. Hofstede (1980) defined individualism as the emotional independence of individual persons from groups, organization, or other collectivities. Therefore, Chinese children become more and more open-mind, and Americanized. The availabilities of internet access provide Chinese students more resources about independence, and liberty. There now is rich body of work on the new family role of only children, and aging parents' expectations. I argued, as the development of globalization, the current tendencies of elderly caring and belief would appear to Chinese families regardless the implantation of one-child policy.

## **IMPLICATION OF THE ELDERLY CARE**

Historically, the primary mechanism by which the young cared for the old was through shared living arrangements. Parents relocate with their sons, retaining control over family clan. After the death of one parent, family assets divided within siblings, who are expected to care for the single elderly.

### **Create Care Centers for the Elderly in Rural Areas**

Since the rural parents are less capable to pay social insurances during lifespan, it is important for the elderly having places to stay in late years. As the increasing number of labor mobility from rural to urban China, most elderly do not have children to support their daily assistance. The establish of such services meet the needs of the elderly whose children do not live with them, in another side, the care centers also provide employment opportunities for residents in rural areas, and increase the economic growth.

### **Re-estimate the Social Insurance System in Rural China**

The primary problems of operating social insurance in rural area are that the residents cannot pay the insurance fund before retirement. Most residents' incomes are from physical labor, such as farming, agriculture, handicraft industry. In contrast, urban residents who favor higher incomes only need to afford small portion of their household incomes to pay their fund. Thus, the new policy of social insurance should base on the current financial status. For example, if urban residents are required to pay \$ 300 out of \$

5000 for pre-fund, then the rural residents should be expected to pay less than \$ 30 out of \$ 500, instead of paying \$ 300. In this case, the economical gap between urban and rural areas could be reduced, and the elderly caring issue in rural China could be moderated.

### **Long-term and Medical Care**

Currently, long-term care in China is provided by family or volunteers in the community. Nationally, only 169, 000 elderly people or 0.33% of the 65 and overpopulation were institutionalized in 1984 (Liang et al. 1986). A low rate of young age and high growth of elderly population indicates that Chinese population may get older and increasing needs for long-term care are required in future. According to Liang et al. (1986), the per capita health expenditure in China is relatively high for a country at its low per capita income level; there are three forms of health insurance, government health insurance, labor insurance, and rural cooperative insurance. Unfortunately, all the beneficiaries who covered by health insurances have to be under social insurance systems. The system does not provide any special entitlement to the aged. Therefore, for the aged people who haven't prepaid social insurance or self-employed before are not receiving medical care. This situation places significant disadvantages for the elderly people who have not registered under social insurance during employment but are willing to pay medical insurance at late years. Thus, the re-availability of medical care for the elderly should be given.

### **Encourage Independence among Elderly**

The elderly are encouraged to become independent from adult children, preparing to take care themselves. Since the implantation of one-child policy, it is impossible for the elderly completely depend on adult children. Financially, the elderly should beware of the situation, saving incomes for late years and reduce children's burden. Additionally, with the benefits of government policies, such as social insurance, elderly do not have to seek help from medical care. In another way, the aging parents are also recommended to take mutually care of other elderly. For example, lack of companion from adult children may cause loneliness and depression for the elderly, but if the elderly with healthy condition move into nursing house or elderly community with other aging people without children living with. As the growth of students study overseas and immigrate into foreign countries, more aging parents are facing empty houses without adult children. It brings aging parents to establish close relationships with other family members beside lineal kin.

### **International Perspectives**

The elderly issues do not only capture attentions in China, globally, nations are demanding the best ways to deliver care within the restraints of economic cost and productivity, health provision care and costs, and cultural and ethnic differences and traditions.

In the U.S., and in many European countries, people live longer with the

advantages of medical care and improved economic conditions. However, fewer children to take care older parents who live longer than they ever before. This fact demands more support from society and higher financial availability from hospitals and communities. Historically, the chronically ill had been herded into large, impersonal and sometimes abusive settings away from view (Papalia et al, 2006). As a result, for those who are unable to care for themselves, a more individual approach in health care was approved (Papalia et al. 2006). Countries like Sweden, Norway, Denmark, the UK and Australia have attempted to balance the cost of state care with a broader mix of private and community-based care (Papalia et al. 2006).

In general, greater wealth and financial independence develop the increasing supportive care services and institutional care all over the world. The elderly should look for professional care, promoting health, and enrich lifestyle.

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